

## Claims

What is claimed is:

1. A method of controlling access to data,  
comprising:

5           in response to a request from a requestor for  
access to data stored in an encoded form on a  
first data processing apparatus, sending a request  
from a decoding controller on the first data  
10           processing apparatus to a second data processing  
apparatus to determine attributes of a decoding  
process for accessing the encoded data;

          in response to said request to the second  
data processing apparatus, receiving said  
determined attributes at said decoding controller;

15           performing the decoding process in accordance  
with the determined attributes.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein the  
requestor communicates via an application programming  
interface with a data access manager which includes the  
20           decoding controller, the application programming interface  
being predefined such that the decoding controller and any  
received decoding attributes are shielded from the  
requestor.

3. A method according to claim 1, wherein received attributes are stored in volatile memory of the first data processing apparatus when received, and are deleted from said memory at the end of a current requestor session, such  
5 that a request to determine attributes of a decoding process must be repeated for each requestor session for which access to encoded data is required.

4. A method according to claim 1, wherein the determined attributes of a decoding process include  
10 identifiers of one or more of: a cryptor used in encryption and required for decryption; a compressor used in compression and required for decompression; and an authenticator for requestor authentication.

5. A method according to claim 4, including the  
15 steps, subsequent to receiving said determined attributes, of:

checking whether program code implementing said identified cryptor, compressor and authenticator is stored on the first data  
20 processing apparatus; and, if not, initiating downloading of the respective program code from the second data processing apparatus or another data processing apparatus.

25 6. A method according to claim 1, wherein the determined attributes of a decoding process include program code implementing the decoding process.

7. A method according to claim 1, wherein the attributes of a decoding process include one or more decoding keys for use in decryption or authentication.

5 8. A method according to claim 1, including logging at the second data processing apparatus said requests to determine attributes.

10 9. A method according to claim 1, including authenticating the requestor to the second data processing apparatus before determining the attributes of the decoding process.

10. A computer program product comprising  
machine-readable recording medium having recorded thereon  
computer program code implementing functions for controlling  
the operation of a data processing apparatus on which the  
5 program code runs to perform the following steps of a method  
for controlling access to encoded data:

10 in response to a request from a requestor for  
access to data stored in an encoded form on a  
first data processing apparatus, sending a request  
from a decoding controller on the first data  
processing apparatus to a second data processing  
apparatus to determine attributes of a decoding  
process for accessing the encoded data;

15 in response to said request to the second  
data processing apparatus, receiving said  
determined attributes at said decoding controller;

performing the decoding process in accordance  
with the determined attributes.

11. A first data processing apparatus including:

a processing unit;

data storage means;

communication means for sending and receiving  
communications from data processing systems  
connectable to said first data processing  
apparatus via a network; and

a decoding controller, responsive to a  
request from a requestor for access to data stored  
in an encoded form in said data storage means, for  
sending a request via said communication means to  
a second data processing apparatus to determine  
attributes of a decoding process for accessing the  
encoded data and for receiving said determined  
attributes via said communication means;

wherein the decoding controller is adapted to  
control the operation of the processing unit to  
perform the decoding process in accordance with  
the determined attributes.

12. A data processing apparatus, including:

a processing unit;

5           data storage means storing attributes of one  
or more decoding processes, which processes are  
associated with specific data stored in an encoded  
form on the data processing apparatus; and

10           an access controller component, for  
retrieving the stored attributes from the memory  
in response to a request from a remote data  
processing apparatus, and for sending the  
retrieved attributes to the data processing  
apparatus.

15           13. A data processing apparatus according to claim 12,  
including means for logging said requests to determine  
attributes.

20           14. A data processing apparatus according to claim 12,  
including means for authenticating the requestor before  
retrieving the stored attributes of a decoding process.

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